

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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DIVISION OF SPORT FISH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**COPPER RIVER PERSONAL USE DIP NET SALMON FISHING SCHEDULE
WEEK OF JUNE 16 – JUNE 22**

The Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery will open from 12:01 a.m. Monday, June 16 through 11:59 p.m. Sunday, June 22. Harvest supplemental to the annual limit for sockeye salmon is allowed during this week – see below for the fishery rules and harvest limits. In addition, effective 12:01 a.m. Monday, June 16, the Chitina dip net fishery **will be closed to the retention of king salmon for the remainder of the season.** King salmon incidentally taken must be released immediately and returned to the water unharmed.

Standard rules that apply during the June 16 weekly period are as follows:

- Personal use fishermen must possess both a Chitina Personal Use fishery permit and a valid resident sport fishing license when fishing.
- The annual limit is 15 salmon for a household of one, and 30 salmon for a household of two or more.
- **Steelhead** cannot be kept, and must be returned to the water unharmed.
- Harvest must be recorded on the permit immediately. Immediately is defined as before concealing the salmon from plain view or transporting the salmon from the fishing site. Fishing site means the location where the fish was removed from the water and became part of the permit holder's bag limit.
- The tips of the tail of personal use caught fish must be clipped immediately upon landing a fish.

During this period, a supplemental harvest of 10 sockeye salmon per household, in addition to the annual limit, will be allowed. Rules pertaining to the supplemental harvest are:

- Supplemental sockeye salmon may only be harvested if the annual limit has been filled.
- Supplemental harvest must be recorded on the permit immediately.
- The supplemental harvest box must be checked.

The Copper River personal use fishery is managed under direction outlined in the Copper River Personal Use Dip Net Salmon Fishery Management Plan (5 AAC 77.591). The plan

establishes the season from June 7 through September 30, and directs the department to establish weekly periods based on Miles Lake sonar counts. During June 2 – June 8, there were 198,609 salmon counted past the Miles Lake sonar. The preseason projection for this period was 111,020 salmon, which results in a surplus of 87,589 salmon. Copper River sockeye salmon migratory timing and the previous five-year average harvest and participation rates indicate sufficient numbers of salmon available to maintain 168 hours of fishing time during the week of June 16 – June 22.

The plan also directs the department to allow increased annual limits when a weekly harvestable surplus of 50,000 or more salmon is available in the Chitina Subdistrict. The excess of more than 50,000 salmon above the preseason sonar projection for this period allows the supplemental harvest of 10 additional sockeye salmon for those permit holders who have already harvested their original permit limit.

The king salmon run to the Copper River appears to be weaker than the preseason forecast of 62,000 king salmon and the run timing appears earlier than average. The cumulative commercial harvest, as of June 7, is approximately 7,971 king salmon, is below the expected level, and is the 4th lowest cumulative harvest through this date since 1980.

Catch rates in the Native Village of Eyak research fish wheels through June 7 are the lowest since 2003, with the exception of 2013 when the king salmon run timing was significantly late. Low water conditions on the Copper River generally reduce the harvest rates of king salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net and the Glennallen Subdistrict subsistence fisheries. However, catch rates of king salmon in these fisheries are below expected levels even when accounting for the low water conditions.

The first king salmon was observed at the Gulkana River counting tower on June 5th, this is the second earliest date for king salmon to be observed at the counting tower since it began operating in 2002, but does not provide insight into the strength of the king salmon run at this time. Given the uncertainty associated with all of the indicators of Copper River king salmon abundance, a precautionary management approach in the upper Copper River fisheries is warranted.

The *Copper River King Salmon Fishery Management Plan* directs the Department to manage the Copper River fisheries to achieve a sustainable escapement goal in the upper Copper River of 24,000 or more king salmon. From 2002–2008, Copper River king salmon escapement averaged 33,316 fish, but has ranged from 16,771 to about 29,000 fish since 2009. Inseason run strength indicators through June 8, and the generally poor stock performance trend over the last 5 years, indicate the need to take restrictive action and therefore justify prohibiting the retention of king salmon in the Chitina Subdistrict personal use dip net fishery to ensure achievement of the sustainable escapement goal.

Information regarding the fishery can be found at the ADF&G web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=PersonalUsebyAreaInteriorChitina.main>. This site provides information regarding the Upper Copper River fisheries including: fishery descriptions and summaries, maps of the subdistricts, a listing of vendors that carry the permits, and links to the sonar numbers and fishing schedule emergency orders.

The current fishing schedule and river conditions will be announced on the Chitina Fishery information line at 822-5224 (Glennallen), 459-7382 (Fairbanks), and 267-2511 (Anchorage). Please contact an information phone line prior to planning your trip to Chitina to ensure that the fishery will be open when you arrive. If you have any questions regarding the Chitina Subdistrict personal use fishery, please contact the ADF&G office in Glennallen at (907) 822-3309.

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